

Proposed Witchcraft Convictions (Pardons) (Scotland) Bill

Introduction

A proposal for a Bill to pardon all those convicted under the Witchcraft Act 1563.

The consultation runs from 23 June 2022 to 15 September 2022

All those wishing to respond to the consultation are strongly encouraged to enter their responses electronically through this survey. This makes collation of responses much simpler and quicker. However, the option also exists of sending in a separate response (in hard copy or by other electronic means such as e-mail), and details of how to do so are included in the member's consultation document.

Questions marked with an asterisk (*) require an answer.

All responses must include a name and contact details. Names will only be published if you give us permission, and contact details are never published – but we may use them to contact you if there is a query about your response. If you do not include a name and/or contact details, we may have to disregard your response.

Please note that you must complete the survey in order for your response to be accepted. If you don't wish to complete the survey in a single session, you can choose "Save and Continue later" at any point. Whilst you have the option to skip particular questions, you must continue to the end of the survey and press "Submit" to have your response fully recorded.

Please ensure you have read the consultation document before responding to any of the questions that follow. In particular, you should read the information contained in the document about how your response will be handled. The consultation document is available here:

[Consultation Document](#)

[Privacy Notice](#)

I confirm that I have read and understood the Privacy Notice which explains how my personal data will be used.

On the previous page we asked you if you are UNDER 12 YEARS old, and you responded Yes to this question.

If this is the case, we will have to contact your parent or guardian for consent.

If you are under 12 years of age, please put your contact details into the textbox. This can be your email address or phone number. We will then contact you and your parents to receive consent.

Otherwise please confirm that you are or are not under 12 years old.

No Response

About you

Please choose whether you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation.
Note: If you choose "individual" and consent to have the response published, it will appear under your own name. If you choose "on behalf of an organisation" and consent to have the response published, it will be published under the organisation's name.

an individual

Which of the following best describes you? (If you are a professional or academic, but not in a subject relevant to the consultation, please choose "Member of the public".)

Member of the public

Optional: You may wish to explain briefly what expertise or experience you have that is relevant to the subject-matter of the consultation.

Modern Pagan (member of the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids)

Please select the category which best describes your organisation

No Response

Please choose one of the following:

I am content for this response to be published and attributed to me or my organisation

Please provide your Full Name or the name of your organisation. (Only give the name of your organisation if you are submitting a response on its behalf).

(Note: the name will not be published if you have asked for the response to be anonymous or "not for publication". Otherwise this is the name that will be published with your response).

Snooze Hamilton (given first name is Heather, but I go by my nickname)

Please provide details of a way in which we can contact you if there are queries regarding your response. Email is preferred but you can also provide a postal address or phone number.

We will not publish these details.

Aim and approach - Note: All answers to the questions in this section may be published (unless your response is "not for publication").

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposed Bill? (Please note that this question is compulsory.)

Fully supportive

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposed Bill? (Please note that this question is compulsory.)

Please explain the reasons for your response.

I'm a modern Pagan who moved here from the USA in part to get away from increasingly aggressive extremists with a theocratic agenda that misuse religion to make society less tolerant of diversity and push people to be anti-science and anti-critical thinking. The USA's Satanic Panic of the 80s and 90s never completely died out, and I'm seeing people with the same evangelical agenda come over here to the UK to peddle it. While the victims of witch paranoia weren't the same species as modern Pagans or witchcraft practitioners, I have a vested interest in seeing society promote norms that are geared toward fairness, rationality, and a healthy level of open mindedness. It's especially appalling that many of the victims were village "wise people" or living almanacs using folkway cures, who were the closest thing many poorer people of the era had to any kind of medical help such as it was then. Or people who were merely socially inconvenient. To me, going through with the pardon sends multiple good messages across social lines.

Q2. Do you think legislation is required, or are there other ways in which the proposed Bill's aims could be achieved more effectively? Please explain the reasons for your response.

I think the Bill sends the message that social norms have improved, and people want to keep moving toward fairness and rationality.

While I don't think you can legislate morality when it's based on something as subjective as religion (or someone appropriating religion), laws are a symbol of what we think is important enough to have said "social conventions aren't enough here, we need the weight of legislation". I see this bill as a statement about who we want to be as a society; willing to do something about wrongs of the past as well as creating a better future for everyone.

Financial Implications

Q3. Any new law can have a financial impact which would affect individuals, businesses, the public sector, or others. What financial impact do you think this proposal could have if it became law?

no overall change in costs

Please explain the reasons for your answer.

If the gesture is attractive to global businesses and other interests that want to invest in a nation that is actively pursuing fairness and diversity, that's a good thing.

Equalities

Q4. What overall impact is the proposed Bill likely to have on equality, taking account of the following protected characteristics (under the Equality Act 2010): age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation?

Positive

Please explain the reasons for your response including the impact on people with particular protected characteristics

Many of the people who were victims of the witch paranoia were people who merely had some characteristic that someone else found inconvenient or "unusual". Punching down is nothing new. They

Q4. What overall impact is the proposed Bill likely to have on equality, taking account of the following protected characteristics (under the Equality Act 2010): age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation?

were victims of someone else's efforts to grab social or economic power who happened to have some quality that made them opportune targets to go after, who lacked the social capital to fight back. In a society where being female, foreign, poor, having a different appearance or medical issue, or just not following proscribed norms closely enough to suit someone means you're a second class person, or not a person at all, abusers that look for such targets have plenty to choose from. The bill sends a message that Scotland doesn't want to be that kind of society.

Sustainability

Q5. Any new law can impact on work to protect and enhance the environment, achieve a sustainable economy, and create a strong, healthy, and just society for future generations.

Do you think the proposal could impact in any of these areas? (If you do not have a view then skip to next question)

Please explain the reasons for your answer, including what you think the impact of the proposal could be, and if there are any ways you think the proposal could avoid negative impacts?

Previous answers apply here

General

Q6. Do you have any other additional comments or suggestions on the proposed Bill (which have not already been covered in any of your responses to earlier questions)?

I would like to make it clear that I don't support the idea that modern Pagans and witches should see the victims as our "spiritual ancestors". This is not historically or spiritually accurate. I think we need to be broader than that. We owe them this effort because any people who are unfairly treated should be first in line to stand up for other people who are treated unfairly. And since a monopoly on religion was the vehicle used for this travesty, we owe it to the future to stand up for diversity.